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ABSTRACT

In his review of the role of the student coucil adviser in junior high schools, Reum first looks at the characteristics of sixth through ninth grade students and student leaders and then at those of a student council adviser who should like junior high school students and relate well with students and faculty. Reum points out a potential role conflict for the adviser who serves both as a student council member and as a part of the school administration. The author provides helpful suggestions for conducting meetings, organizing committees, handling finances, planning activities, managing public relations and publicity, and evaluating projects. Especially useful for a student council adviser, lists of typical committee structures and activities from September to June offer many ideas. (Author/LAA)

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Of LOVE and MAGIC

The Junior High/Middle School Student Council Adviser

by
Earl Reum

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by Earl Reum

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Contents

		Page
	About the Author	*ii*
	Foreword	*iii*
	Introduction	*iv*
Chapter 1	Who Are the Students?	1
Chapter 2	The Adviser's Role	16
Chapter 3	Meetings and Committees	21
Chapter 4	Planning Activities	26
Chapter 5	Finances	34
Chapter 6	Public Relations and Accountability	37

About the Author

Earl Reum ("room") is supervisor of student activities for the Denver Public Schools, a position which assigns him the responsibilities for the extra-class activities of more than 96,000 young people. He designs events to promote scholarship, human relations, leadership, and other dimensions of responsible citizenship.

Reum's leadership extends beyond the Denver area as well; for more than ten years, he has been the director of the National Leadership Training Conference conducted annually at Camp Cheley at Estes Park, Colo. Each year he talks with more than 40,000 student leaders in all parts of the country at leadership conferences and state conventions.

In addition to having taught English, speech, and social studies, Reum has introduced others to the mysteries of magic, juggling, and ventriloquism. Past president of a Denver area magicians' club, he has performed in more than 1,200 shows for the Red Cross, PTA's, and the USO. The first program televised on Denver's educational television station KRMA was "Earl's House," a live series for children that appeared three times a week for three years.

Reum is also an assistant editor of School Activities Magazine and has been chairman of the student council division of the Colorado High School Activities Association for the past ten years.

Foreword

Publications of the National Association of Student Councils have as their primary focus existing or recommended programs of middle, junior, or senior high schools. This monograph deals with students and student councils in the middle and junior high years and the advisers who work with them. The author who was chosen to take on this rather sensitive assignment has gained rich experience with this age group while serving as Supervisor of Student Activities for the Denver Public Schools. Earl Reum needs little introduction to those who are acquainted with the exciting and challenging world of student councils. The ingredients of an abiding faith in young people and a contagious enthusiasm for what they are and what they do are his trademark.

The flavor of the manuscript can be captured by a single question raised by the author as to who should serve as an adviser. "An adviser should be a person who *likes* middle and junior high school students. He should be a person who believes in their abilities, has faith in their honesty, and is continually restored by their *enthusiasm*. He must be aware that at any moment the rest of the faculty may circulate a petition to have him transferred. . . . He must be abundantly blessed with love and magic!"

His descriptions of sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students radiate warmth and affection, with an appropriate measure of humor. The guidelines seldom stray from the center of the target, and we recommend their study and implementation by the beginner as well as the experienced adviser or administrator.

Owen B. Kiernan
Secretary
National Association of Student Councils
Executive Secretary
National Association of Secondary
School Principals

Introduction

A student council is an organization of elected student representatives who meet together regularly and get involved with their teachers, their administration, and their community to make their school better and to learn in the process.

A student council must represent students in the school: it must include representation from students who are in many activities and students who are in no activities; honor roll students and those students on the other end of the grade scale; students who like their school and students who don't like it; and students from both sides of the freeway. All students must have a chance to be heard and to be represented.

A student council should be a source of ideas. Every school needs fresh and relevant ideas to keep it vibrant, and junior high schools need to be vibrating to keep the student population interested. These ideas can concern almost anything in the school, and many of them will be ideas that the students themselves can carry through to logical conclusions.

A student council should be a forum for discussing ideas from all sources--students (including non-council members), teachers, parents and other adults, and community organizations. Out of these discussions comes student evaluation. The ideas that pass this rigorous evaluation are usually worthy of being implemented.

A student council, particularly in a junior high school, can be a sparkplug for the entire school. Nowhere in the school framework is there so much potential enthusiasm and energy for organizing to do a job, and it can do a great job if given a chance.

A student council is the best means we have today of involving students in the democratic decision-making process. Students do not have exclusive decision-making authority, but student ideas must be incorporated in the decisions.

A student council that is well-advised and well-grounded will reflect the confidence of its constituents. The council, as it undertakes responsibility, demonstrates to junior high students how democracy works.

If one of the goals of education is to help young citizens learn how to work successfully in communities, how to muster public opinion, how to sell an idea (or a pickle), and how to work with groups and agencies and with each other; the objectives of education in the junior high/middle school must include the student council experience. It's where democratic action can begin and be affirmed in its growth.

If one of our goals is to help learners discover the tremendous feelings of accomplishment that come from completing a successful project and the deep learning experiences involved in having plans misfire (and in the process discovering ideas that are relevant in practice, significant in living, and appropriate in understanding), we are on the right track when we speak for the student council experience.

--ER

Chapter 1 Who Are the Students?

Sixth Graders

He is either a lazybones or a human dynamo because of the wide variation in physical growth this year. Some eleven-year-olds are approaching puberty and may seem lazy. Some are so busy growing that they have no energy for anything else. Those who are nowhere near puberty are often super-energetic. There is a wide variation between girls and boys, with girls usually maturing more rapidly than boys. Students frequently elect the more mature members of their class, although it is possible they might choose the least mature just to buck the system.

Students are working for acceptance of and by each other at this stage of development. Girls may approach the boy-crazy stage, while boys may develop intense animosity towards girls. Great fellowships exist among the class. Because of bodily changes and physical reactions, the moods and behaviors are very hard to predict. An adviser must extend responsibility to leaders but must not expect total acceptance of responsibility. An adviser should build in a face-saving opportunity with each leadership opportunity, but this requires considerable followup and guidance through the system's procedures.

The adviser must be ready for social blunders and tear-filled sessions when things simply do not happen right. The sixth grader is deeply influenced by the peer group, but he is also reaching out toward adults, wanting to share their world. There is solid club and group allegiance, but there are many wonderful opportunities for a one-to-one relationship between the adviser and the student leader. The student wants to be consulted and asked for his advice, and to be considered in all classroom and school situations that affect him. He lives in a world where special intimacy draws a group together with jokes and situations shared.

School, community, and world problems can be discussed as they would be with adults; sixth graders thrive on it and can measure up to it.

The sixth grader may be very critical of adults, even while reaching out to them for acceptance. He welcomes leadership because of the security it gives him. The adviser can try to avoid the areas where the student seems most sensitive. He does not want to be talked down to or lectured, and he cannot forgive sarcasm. He accepts straight talk when he has it coming. He sometimes needs direct control because his own controls are not yet fully developed.

The Sixth Grade Leader

A sixth grade leader is able to work with a group on extended projects which call for cooperation and pooled thinking. He works best with a congenial group organized on the basis of friendship and

common interests. Anger, confrontation, debate, and decision are difficult settings for a student of this age to work in effectively. The adviser should set up small group situations composed of mostly sixth graders. Eighth and ninth graders will dominate the younger students if plans don't include special sixth grade groupings.

Sixth grade groups can achieve together in an amazing fashion, providing individual contributions and carrying them out effectively as a group. A sixth grader is able and willing to share coveted jobs as part of his maturing concept of the value of group thinking and doing. He becomes unduly ambitious beyond reasonable limits, and he needs help from the adviser in setting those limits.

The sixth grader is very sensitive when his own behavior and abilities are involved. He wants recognition and approval, but these must be based upon real achievement. An adviser must be careful that the sixth grader has worked for any honor for which he is recognized. The adviser must attempt to give him a job which, when it is well done, will really merit approval.

The sixth grader is critical of his personal artistic products and often is able to judge his own ability. Any comment on his sense of color in a poster, his feeling for design, his skill in measuring accurately, or any creative ability his work might show must be balanced by criticism and suggestions. He wants an honest judgment of his achievement in work with the group and in personal relationships.

The sixth grade leader is growing in his ability to generalize, to see relationships, and to foresee probable results. The adviser can give him learning experiences which provide practice in generalizing, in relating to others, or in predicting outcomes.

He is willing to look into subject matter areas and can see genuine relationships between people and their environments. Social differences and similarities make sense to him. He can relate scientific developments to their influence on world relationships.

The sixth grader is often baffled by the concrete/abstract continuum. For example, he frequently defines generosity or loyalty in terms of his own relationships.

Many sixth graders are interested in people, communities, and the world. They are interested in other people's ideas and beliefs and are eager to serve in community drives and activities. They have discovered the constant flow of change--how time and distance and world events can change their lives.

Specific jobs in any campaign will be well-handled if the guidelines are spelled out. When students are involved in designing the specific jobs, they will carry them out after the decisions are made. The sixth grader needs to belong and to feel important--to <u>be</u> important. One of the great techniques for involvement includes the meaningful use of a student council.

Seventh Graders

The seventh grader is loyal to the codes of his peer group. He will sacrifice adult approval rather than lose prestige with his friends.

At this age, when his physical growth and his emotional reactions are threatening his security, he finds comfort and assurance in being as much like his mates as he can--in haircuts, clothes, slang, and especially in behavior. The fact is that a period of "hanging together" is something to be recognized, respected, and capitalized on, rather than combatted.

Advisers should avoid creating situations in which the seventh grader is forced to show disloyalty to his friends. One of the teacher's jobs is to let young people help in setting standards and codes of classroom behavior. They might help to plan homework assignments and design penalties for not completing the work. However, seventh graders find assurance in the occasional situations when a teacher sets an absolute limit. Limiting freedom requires a teacher's judgment and understanding; it requires ability to compromise on minor points but remain firm on major ones.

The seventh grader welcomes any opportunity to assume responsibility. Teachers should try to let him do real jobs, even to take on some of the work they could do more easily themselves. These jobs are not just buying buns for the class picnic, but assuming genuine responsibility for classroom management, for planning experiences in relation to the current project, for gathering and organizing materials, and for class participation in a school or community project.

The student will need help. He may fail. He is sometimes overly ambitious about tomorrow's project, but he must be given opportunity to grow in his ability to assume responsibility.

The seventh grader shifts rapidly in his loyalty to social groups at school. As his interests change, he seeks companions with similar interests. At the end of a cooperative project, many youngsters indicate that they would rather work with someone else on the next one. They are in the trying-out stage, both in interests and in friendships. The most effective basis for temporary grouping seems to be friendship. Maturity differences are liable to enter suddenly into personal relationships, causing misunderstandings. When Bob goes out for band and Joe for girls, their friendship can dissolve rapidly. Bob and Joe both need the help of an understanding adult; why not a teacher who knows and likes them both?

The Seventh Grade Leader

The seventh grade student council leader can usually recognize the main stream of activity. He is usually elected from a large group of applicants who enthusiastically seek security from recognition by the peer group.

Seventh grade leaders are eager adventurers. The elected leaders are often more knowledgeable socially than the great majority of seventh graders and, unless guided, may plan an elaborate dance, at which they will be the only happy participants. With guidance, they can become sensitive to the needs of others and function with a sense of justice. Their standards are usually high and their sense of right and wrong frequently absolute.

Their reign of office may be short. Popularity changes rapidly among seventh graders. An also-ran might become the favorite, wielding peer pressure with great strength. It is a most difficult human calling to be elected status leader by seventh graders.

A seventh grade student council performs a genuine function when it recognizes the makeup and need of the seventh grade person. An adviser must indirectly remind seventh graders of goals and needs. Advice is seldom sought. The seventh grade adviser will either lose his mind or perform a masterful guidance job in accordance with his understanding of the seventh grade student and the seventh grade leader and his council.

Eighth Graders

Eighth graders vary more widely in physical and mental development than students at any other level. Youngsters in the eighth grade are at once little boys and young giants, little girls and mature women. Mental, social, and physical abilities vary as widely. No set of desks or textbooks will meet all the needs of these assorted bodies and brains which all change at different speeds. Teachers have to adjust the amount and quantity of work expected of individuals in each class. It is impossible to make individual assignments always, but adjustments in thinking and judgment can be made as the teacher realizes that six-foot Jim is so busy growing that for the time being there is little energy left for schoolwork.

The eighth grader is interested in his personal appearance. Just when he is looking his worst, usually in eighth grade, he discovers that there is another sex. Girls are even more interested in boys. Hair combing becomes excessive. Good grooming questions arise. Posture improves. Fads proliferate. Teachers can give vital advice on posture, diet, and cleanliness to help offset the less attractive aspects of development at this time. A casual but sincere teacher helps the student face situations with humor and realize that uneven growth at this stage is everyone's problem. Common spirit may develop within a class. PTA meetings are filled with anxious questions as to when this stage will end.

The eighth grader's excessive concern over his health and development may lead him to become overly aggressive or withdrawn. A youngster may discuss his worries with a teacher. Temporary or imaginary difficulty may be resolved by the teacher's reassurance. Difficulties of greater magnitude can be faced directly. He is often emotionally unstable--unsure of himself--and attempts to hide his insecurity with extreme agressiveness--with being critical and argumentative. He speaks loudly and confidently about everything. He prides himself in being critical of the administration of the building and of the country. He fights for his own personal and social status. Sarcasm is dangerous because he misunderstands it or else suffers complete deflation from it. Because he is trying to build his own ego, confusion will result if his ego is threatened.

He needs to become more genuinely sure of himself. Opportunities in council activities can help in this status struggle. He needs the

companionship and understanding of adults to whom he may turn. He wants genuine guidance and leadership--being "told" sometimes and not always thrown upon his own judgment and personal resources. He often selects a teacher, a hero, a leader as his model. He needs to be treated with respect. He needs sincere relationships with others. He needs advice at appropriate times.

The eighth grader is less impressed with and less willing to accept "book learning" than the seventh grader. "What good will it do me?" is a favorite "cop out." He is concerned with himself and his own problems and judges everything in terms of immediate self-advantage. Teaching must, therefore, take account of pupil interests and problems. Practical application of all subject matter to interests, elections, hobbies, clubs, organizations, current happenings, heroic figures, or scientific developments helps these young people relate learning to living.

The Eighth Grade Leader

The eighth grader is often interested in money and in money-making activities and accepts advice and suggestions in these matters. He wants to prove that he can earn a living. He enjoys practice in handling money earned through school activities, such as drives, entertainments, concerts, and other social events. Student activities provide excellent opportunities for youngsters to assume financial responsibilities.

The eighth grade leader may be a renegade; a critic; or a brave, name-calling speech giver. He is difficult to control. He is often socially knowledgeable, physically mature, and rather frank in his opinions. Codes of conduct very much like those of early Indian tribesmen may develop among eighth graders. It is a virtue to lie to outsiders, but one cannot lie within the tribe. Eighth graders are convinced that no adult understands their conversation or shared secrets or discovery of the other sex.

The eighth grade leader often behaves as least expected. An officer may suddenly earn expulsion from school. A quiet boy may "mouth off" to the president of the faculty senate.

Eighth grade student council projects must have peer approval and must be almost invisibly guided by the adviser in order to be effective. Contrary attitudes will suddenly destroy accepted projects. Committees change more in character than in names of members, because of rapid changes among eighth graders as human beings.

The leader who is deeply conscious of his social role and popularity will sometimes nearly destroy himself to maintain peer approval. He needs an adviser who listens and learns. During this most difficult year for young people, the eighth grade council may be a calming and rewarding experience.

Ninth Graders

Although the person in ninth grade is still concerned with his peculiarities of physical and social development, he gives evidence of growing up. He can deal with others on more adult terms than he

could before. He is achieving new, more mature relationships with peers of both sexes. He is developing long-time friendships based on social factors and interests. He is not as dependent upon his group as he was before. Teachers are able to meet him on a more personal basis, because the group and group code diminish as a barrier. The ninth grader seeks to be liked and included in social activities, and he is more sure of his friends and his standing with them. He sees himself more objectively.

The ninth grader is beginning to think of school and to select activities and subjects in terms of his own special interests and future plans. An officer will seek election, for instance, because he believes it to be an aid in entering college. He begins to recognize personal development as essential and sets about accomplishing it.

The ninth grader wants to have his opinions taken seriously by adults, and he wants to make decisions which are respected. A genuine exchange of opinion is welcomed. His follow-through is better than at any other stage of junior high. He can reach a decision through discussion, but likes to have a majority vote behind him. He sometimes lacks regard for a peer point of view opposite to his own. He is self-reliant, but at times will assume responsibility beyond his scope.

Interested in the world of current happenings and developments, the ninth grade youngster wants to discuss these matters and is

delighted to give his opinions. Ninth graders like to exhibit their intelligence and to let teachers know what is really happening.

The Ninth Grade Leader

The ninth grade leader is very often the president of the student body and an expert senior statesman. He monopolizes meetings if given a chance. He plays his role carefully throughout the building. He is crafty in dealing with other ninth graders, but will simply explain the facts to eighth and seventh graders. He must fight constantly to maintain his pride and to prevent any loss of image before his peers.

The ninth grade girl leader encourages others to talk, plants ideas, motivates the group, selects social partners, and is often working simultaneously at several levels within a group. She knows how to deal with adults and is good at it.

The ninth grade leader is aware of peer understanding and approval to a greater degree than other ninth graders are. He knows the climate and how to influence it. He is usually the expert in new dances and serves as the fashion authority and cultural guidepost for fads and fancies. Group leadership serves to keep him in the mainstream with a few close friends, although he may still identify with the group who got him elected.

He will attend to leadership jobs rather than to studies; the faculty may too often remind the adviser of that fact. He believes

it is selfish of him to do homework first when he has the responsibilities of student office.

The ninth grader has a desire to accomplish that which no other student council leader has ever done. New ideas (often age-old) are often suggested as necessary for this council to make its contribution to eternity. He often suggests projects outside the realm of student council influence, such as teacher rating without faculty consent, school board politicking, and personal calls on the governor or superintendent.

He needs to have opportunity for real decision-making. He does not readily accept the advice of a principal, but will accept the decisions of the higher administration. Councils will often question the right of the principal to lay down rulings which are contrary to their desires. Much boundary-seeking goes on among ninth graders. Once they settle in, their decisions are usually sound and positive.

Ninth graders serve a student council as judgment posts. They determine the votes of seventh and eighth grade council members by their example. The leader will not be bribed as a public servant, nor will he sell the interest of voters for private advantage. He is distressed with intrigue among national leaders and state legislators.

Many student councils allow officers to serve only a half year because of student tendency to commit academic suicide. Other councils use an executive committee rather than a single president,

a policy which avoids placing the awesome burden of perfection on the shoulders of ninth grade individuals. It is a difficult challenge for ninth graders to manage a public life and to develop normally along with other ninth graders.

The ninth grade council leader will read student activities books and will study the projects section of a student council handbook--not to establish a philosophy for choosing projects, but for ideas of new and different things to do.

The Council in the Middle

A junior high council is a collection of creative abilities which needs a qualified adviser. The adviser must redraw boundaries each year. Self-restriction on the part of the council is unknown but will be accepted if imposed by the administration. A junior high school council tends to pattern itself after the local high school council, not realizing that junior high people are less restricted by tradition and that creative new fields are open and available for exploration. Councils can be inspired to encourage scholarship, dynamic citizenship, leadership, and humanitarian ideals and to collect newspapers, junk, and library books by an adviser who recognizes students' potential. These young people represent a paradox of ideals. They are junior high school students serving in a student council.

Chapter 2 The Adviser's Role

The teaching task of the adviser at this level is one of the most challenging roles any person can accept. The student council experience with sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth graders is an entirely different kind of learning vehicle from that of the senior high school council. The differences are most pronounced in the behaviors of the students and in the adviser's leadership functions.

Characteristically, the student council adviser is a good junior high/middle school teacher, one who relates well to both students and faculty. He has an understanding of young people between 11 and 15 years of age. Perhaps the greatest part of the strength a teacher needs comes from the reassurance that he does know these youngsters, in spite of the fact that they are continually doing unpredictable things. Teachers need to guide young people with all the skill, gentleness, and understanding they can muster.

The operational principles of a successful junior high council are easy to describe: the council meets regularly (try for once a week); has organized meetings to help representatives understand what is going on and to make worthy decisions; chooses goals and the projects to achieve those goals early in the year; and then works hard to accomplish those objectives.

The Adviser in Action

Junior high school student council leaders live almost entirely in the present, with the spontaneous, believing that instant change will happen and will be for the good. Each leader believes that good meetings are the gift of the gods (and that the gods favor him) and that the meeting scheduled for Wednesday during second period will be a good one.

The adviser must schedule the executive committee in his room before school on Monday morning to set up the agenda on a master ditto which the student council secretary can make up and have duplicated. This dittoed agenda should be run off quickly and distributed to each teacher's mailbox with a note (also dittoed to save time) saying that the meeting is Wednesday, that this is the agenda, that the representative is expected, and that the adviser appreciates the "splendid" cooperation the council is receiving.

At the Wednesday meeting the adviser should have copies of the agenda available for those who forget to bring them and a box of sharpened pencils so that delegates can fill in their sample agendas. A master agenda should be typed on a ditto master with space for the secretary to print in additional comments, decisions, and bits of business. Five minutes before the end of the period, the secretary should go to the office or ditto room and get the new master run off quickly so that it can be distributed at the door as

representatives leave. Meanwhile, the presiding officer will call upon representatives to give reports. This procedure provides constructive criticism, solid samples, and a genuine learning experience for young leaders. It is difficult for the adviser, but it is worth the trouble for the good that results.

Dealing With the Unexpected

Junior high school leaders are eternally optimistic. The proposed assembly will be as uproariously funny as it sounded when council members described it to each other. (It may bomb badly.)

One of the great learning experiences within the student council arena is the opportunity for the sure one to fail. Good teachers and administrators are aware that failure can provide a vital learning experience for young people. It is better to let a youngster fail in a small group than in a large assembly. It is better to allow failure over unimportant issues than major activities. There should always be a time for reflection and discussion over success or failure in order to help the learning experience happen.

Junior high leaders regularly avoid or ignore channels. The governor may call to ask about the appointment the executive committee has scheduled with him--of which the adviser has not yet been informed. The superintendent may leave a note about something the student council has planned that the adviser knows nothing about. Swelled skulls of officers and angry faculty members are not uncommon. Enthusiastic action is a regular part of the student council scene and is evidence of progress.

Officers may forge room passes, absence excuses, even the adviser's signature. The adviser must face the moral, social political, and intellectual implications of everything that goes on. It is difficult work.

Of Love and Magic

An adviser should be a person who likes junior high school students. He should be a person who believes in their abilities, has faith in their honesty, and is continually restored by their enthusiasm. He must be aware that at any moment the rest of the faculty may circulate a petition to have him transferred.

If the adviser has these qualifications, he can easily secure minor items of knowledge that he needs, such as a general knowledge of school policies and the knowledge of the communications channels within the building. The adviser must at times represent the viewpoint of the faculty and administration to the council. More often and more important, he will be representing the viewpoint of the students to the faculty and administration. His role in keeping lines of communication open is crucial and, should he fail in this respect, he will put the entire student council program in serious danger.

The junior high school student council adviser has a different role from that of the senior high school student council adviser. The difference lies not so much in the projects and the committee

structure, but in attitudes, processes, understandings, and speed and techniques of group development. Advice must be given, pertinent questions asked, basic momentum provided, and goals reaffirmed and described in terms of projects. A considerable teaching job is required.

In a sense, the student council adviser is very much a member of the council, not just as speaker, but as track-keeper, direction finder, audience analyzer, tactician, public information provider, consoler, trend consultant, and reviewer. The adviser is also very much a member of the administration, not just as a status person but in pressure recognition, curricular design, image development, and report presentation. He is constantly faced with a boundary skirmish as to whether something is a rightful concern of student council, and with the pointed questions of his fellow teachers as to why the council members are not studying.

He must maintain administration faculty support to the point that <u>everyone</u> will read the minutes. He must maintain constant communication avenues within the school and from the school to the rest of the world. He must be willing to forego his lunch, to pull the auditorium curtain at crucial times during the assembly, and to avoid seeking out second-rate judgment simply to involve the support of others. He must do all things well with not enough time to do them. He must remain optimistic in the face of adversity, and he needs a great sense of humor.

Chapter 3 Meetings and Committees

Meetings will make the difference for the junior high middle school student council. They should be short (usually one class period) and interesting. Leaders must have practice in moving items and keeping interest. Shared leadership roles can pay off during the meetings.

Every representative should have something to do each week of school. There should be ushering jobs, committee meetings, guide assignments, and other kinds of activities to remind each person that he belongs, is needed, and is making a difference. A file-folder system helps initiate ideas while shifting paper.

An adviser does well to have pins or badges of some sort to identify members as soon as they are elected. Special council days designed for the wearing of these pins and special functions for recognition pay off in developing an attitude of membership. It is common practice to have full student council meetings every two weeks and committee sessions during the in-between weeks, with executive committee meetings weekly in the same place at the same time. The school schedule itself will dictate the frequency and time and place of each meeting.

Junior high school students can achieve most when committees are guided. Committees have value if their members understand the

job, prepare to do it, meet on time, participate fully, and report both achievements and opinions to the student council.

Committees

Committees provide greater student involvement, opportunities to learn democratic procedures, and a chance to practice leadership skills and techniques while getting useful things done for the school. Committees can increase work output tremendously with the individual participation and recognition essential to junior high and middle school youngsters.

Committees provide opportunities for creative, outspoken participation by large numbers of students in student council programs. Students need a voice in shaping student council. Members need a chance to sculpture ideas in small groups with a flexible agenda. The process calls for thoughtful, responsible effort by individuals personally involved in student council. Committees are the life's blood of a continuing program of student involvement--if members are willing to uphold decisions achieved in the best interest of the majority of students.

Committees constitute the informal work-group of student council for involving the resources and wisdoms of the entire student body in council decisions, by defining problems, discovering solutions, and communicating these to the student council and school authorities.

Committees can present divergent viewpoints. They can report unresolved issues and use imagination and ingenuity in devising

suggestions for feasible council solutions without the restrictions of rigid parliamentary procedure.

Committees should know and understand the extent of their authority regarding council and school policies.

Committees should conduct meetings which permit (1) member involvement, (2) development of problem realization, (3) worthy human relationships, (4) intelligent discussion, (5) thorough examination and validation of facts, (6) interchange of ideas, and (7) final resolution of genuine problems of concern.

There are two basic types of committees:

- The standing committee is established in the constitution or bylaws. Its membership is usually appointed each year.
- The special committee is appointed to do a specific job. Its existence usually ends when the job is completed.

Once a committee is appointed, it should meet regularly and it should report to the full student council at every meeting. A standing committee that never has a report to make should be evaluated closely and perhaps dissolved. It is the responsibility of the president to follow up on the committees to see that they are organized and functioning.

The executive committee is very important! It is usually composed of the elected officers of the student council, and it should meet at least once between each meeting. This committee should help provide the leadership and supervision for the entire student council.

The executive committee should review and develop the agenda for each student council meeting, and items going to the full council should have a statement of "recommended" or "not recommended" from the executive committee.

Committee Structure

A typical committee structure might look like this:

Standing Committees:

Executive Committee

Social Committee--plans and carries out school social events

Welcoming Committee--plans orientation day; assigns guides for new students, visitors, and substitute teachers

Finance Committee--develops and supervises fund-raising programs and makes recommendations on spending money

Safety Committee--works on a continuous program of school safety, including cooperation with school and community safety groups

Public Relations Committee--See Chapter 6

Principal's Committee--(with rotating membership) keeps the principal informed and registers his concerns with the council

Special Committees:

These committees are formed to plan special events, often

working with the standing committees. For example, a special committee might work with the social committee to plan a specific function.

<u>If committees are active, the student council will be active!!</u>

Chapter 4 Planning Activities

Every adviser of a junior high school student council asks: "What can a junior high school student council do?" The following list is not all-inclusive, and some of these projects are not acceptable in every school. The important thing is to get going and do some things which are related to the council's goals!

In the Beginning . . .

--get together and discuss plans (align projects with purposes of this council, this year)

--get approvals from administration, custodial staff, the faculty, etc.

--study the constitution, the system of organization, the qualifications and philosophy of student council membership, the election procedures, etc.

--act as guides for new students for the first few days of school

--elect homeroom representatives

--elect class officers for incoming 7th grade (if 7, 8, and 9 levels)

--appoint standing committees, such as an advisory council for assemblies

--put tentative dates of projects for the year on the master activities calendar

--acquaint the student body and new teachers with the entire activities program with announcements, handbooks, assemblies, posters, a public relations file, and the grapevine

--submit budget and plans to the principal

--install council officers and members

A Year-Long Activities Calendar

Fall is the time of year to involve students in organizations, to set goals, and to select those projects that can be achieved.

SEPTEMBER (Getting Organized)

Set up a master calendar of meetings and activities

Hold the first meeting to establish purposes, goals, organization, budget, etc.

Appoint standing committees

Set assembly schedule for the year

Teach basic parliamentary procedure, agenda, minutes, and good reporting and recording; review the constitution and procedures

Begin the student council scrapbook for the year

Hear reports from summer conference delegates; bring out officers' objectives and concerns

Pay dues to NASC, state, regional, and local associations

Hold an orientation assembly and follow-up for first year students, transfers, and new teachers

Distribute school handbooks

Publicize school motto, code of conduct, traditions, etc.

Plan a workshop for committee chairmen, committee advisers, and council representatives

Begin leadership training for members and officers

Assist in setting up a program of clubs and related activities.

OCTOBER (On the Move)

Plan and conduct United Way drive

Plan social activities

Develop fire prevention publicity, procedure, posters, etc.

Plan November leadership conference (for local needs)

Assist in planning open school night

Plan school-spirit week (include class level activities)

Plan year-long school-spirit drive to promote participation, citizenship, scholarship, leadership, sportsmanship, etc.

Teach and/or review parliamentary procedure, including motions, criteria of good projects, how to be a good committee member, how to sell ideas, etc.

NOVEMBER (Realizing Some Goals)

Coordinate American Education Week activities

Hold an assembly for teacher appreciation day

Plan a coffee hour for teachers before or after school

Set up a student-teacher day--students previously chosen take charge of a class for one day

Place displays in community store windows

Sponsor a book fair

Hold an exchange program with another school, preferably one with a student body that has a different cultural or socioeconomic background from your own

Re-evaluate documents (code, constitution, regulations, etc.)

Plan a leadership conference for the entire school (clubs, members, etc.)

Sponsor a bulletin board for students

Hold a safety campaign

Promote scholarship

Observe spirit of Thanksgiving (assembly, baskets, etc.)

Teach problem-solving techniques to council members

Review reporting procedures

Make newsletter, handbook, and other references available

Help out at open school night

Winter is an excellent time to re-evaluate, to follow through on projects, to start over where needed, and to follow up with appreciation where the job is completed.

DECEMBER (Involvement)

Collect food and toys for needy families

Collect for March of Dimes or other community service agencies

Plan January elections for officers (if needed)

Set up Christmas decorations, social activities, projects, such as visits to nursing homes or to elderly people

Evaluate progress, teach techniques for conducting opinion polls, interview students and faculty

Plan awards for honor roll students

Plan community concert for the chorus, with carolers going to nursing homes or a children's hospital

Teach ways of involvement in activities and share leadership opportunities

JANUARY (Mid-Year Renewal)

Sponsor book fair in cooperation with the library

Hold elections of officers and representatives for spring semester (if needed)

Plan a special event for honor roll students

Evaluate student council contributions to school life and purposes set in September

Review criteria of a good leader

Select students for mid-year conferences (plan mid-year conference if none is available)

Encourage student involvement in significant school issues through available channels (speak-in, speak-out, faculty interest committee, etc.)

Develop faculty-student seminars--"Mini-school at Mid-Year"

Teach evaluation techniques and principles to council members

FEBRUARY (Caring for Others)

Observe Brotherhood Week

Hold a Valentine's Day dance to raise money for Heart Fund

Plan parent appreciation day

Sponsor a student-faculty basketball game

Celebrate American Heritage Week

Sell valentines and involve a student messenger service (good fund-raiser at this level)

Hold pre-planning sessions similar to those held in September, with second-semester officers and members

Stress citizenship responsibilities

Attend mid-year conference (if available)

Hold Student Council Week activities; sell student council purposes to students and faculty with good publicity ideas

Elect delegates for district conferences (where applicable)

Set up a student exchange program with another school

Spring gives an opportunity for a new beginning and a chance to finish the projects of the year--also to take advantage of experience to plan next year with the wisdom of those who now have student council experience.

MARCH (Participation in School Life)

Carry out special projects

Further community involvement; visit contributing elementary schools, explain student council program, and stress opportunity for student participation

Plan clothing drive for needy families

Plan and hold annual money-raising project for student council

Hold teacher, parent, and administration appreciation days

Discuss leadership conference reports and plans

Participate in Red Cross youth programs (drive for Volunteens, etc.)

Set all-school talent show for daytime or evening

APRIL (Evaluation and Clean-up)

Hold clean-up, paint-up campaigns

Make picnic tables for community park

Plant trees

Plan elections

Set school-community day activities

Hold ninth grade vocational information day

Plan field day activities

Prepare awards for annual awards day

Celebrate school-community day

Review council constitution for evaluation and changes

Review orientation booklet for re-publication

MAY (Endings and Beginnings)

Hold elections

Have a meeting of old and new officers to discuss calendar, budget, and organization

Hold an awards assembly (athletics, extracurricular)

Have a May Day dance

Plan a trip for entire student body

Develop a School Spirit Week

Complete the student council scrapbook

Plan for summer leadership conferences (send reservations)

Plan for September Citizenship Day observance

Begin orientation for fall students--invite 6th grade student council members from contributing elementary schools to breakfast, tour of school, etc.; include panel discussion and slide presentations

Evaluate projects and the entire year, as well as individual contributions, and file evaluations for ready access by new officers

Confer with principal for ideas and suggestions for next year

Submit proposed budget and suggested calendar of events

Invite senior high councils to explain philosophy of high school and to attend council meeting.

JUNE (The End is Near!)

Have a student council picnic

Give a teacher appreciation tea

Schedule summer meetings with officers if possible.

As soon as school is over, have a nervous breakdown--you worked for it; you have earned the opportunity; you owe it to yourself; and nobody should deprive you of it. Please do not allow visitors in your hospital room. Many of your student leaders will visit and perhaps stimulate a relapse for you as well as everyone else in the ward.

Chapter 5 Finances

Once the objectives of the year are selected, money becomes a big concern. Beautiful projects sometimes must be rejected for a lack of funding. Ugly projects must sometimes be adopted because they provide the cash for beautiful projects. The decision must be made in the light of the significance of the learning experience provided, and the esthetic values are of concern for both student and teacher. Unfortunately, pay-as-you-go values are uppermost in the minds of some administrators.

Money problems involve the budgeting process, the money-raising activity, and the spending of the cash. We can get money in three different ways: (1) the administration provides the capital from district funds (or taxes from the student body provide the cash); (2) we sell a product (pickles, fortune cookies, banners, pompons, candy, magazines, etc.); (3) we sell a service or a talent (car wash, fashion show, talent show, international dinner, house painting party, etc.).

Fund-raising guidelines should be set up around activities which meaningfully involve young people. Money-raising ideas should come from students rather than be imposed by administration or faculty. Student monies belong to the school and are audited by the school, but should not be spent on projects that should be funded by the board of education.

Student treasurers can learn a tremendous amount concerning money if they are given the experience and opportunities.

The council members should be aware of the financial condition of their organization and the amount of power/suggestion they have over the disbursement of funds. There are many policies, procedures, and laws that govern school activity funds; these should be checked carefully by the adviser and the student council treasurer.

Student council advisers have to know district policies, procedures, and philosophy. We must know the character foibles of the people who serve in administration, and we must know our own limitations and strengths. The money arena can make a student council adviser bitter--for example, when young people enthusiastically kill themselves to earn cash, only to have the money used for a cause which is unrelated to their goals.

Let us say, then, that we must be concerned about money. We must consciously teach young people the procedures of budgeting, predicting, choosing the projects, depositing the cash, and watching their money work in what we commonly hope will be positive ways.

Junior high school students are frequently not aware of how quickly a student council account will diminish. At the same time, they have a great sense of justice, fairness, and honesty about money. If the principal spends incidental funds in taking central administration to lunch on "our money"--the student council adviser may have to stay a major revolution in the building. Occasionally,

there is the great day on which the principal says the council may determine how to spend the cash in the kitty, and the decision is exciting, educational, and a magnificent learning experience.

Chapter 6 Public Relations, Evaluation, and Accountability

The most effective public relations program of any school, or of any part of the school, is what the student says to his parents at the dinner table each night! However, the students will frequently need help in getting the facts straight. A good public relations program will be honest communication between and among the student council, the students, the faculty, the community, and other groups.

A public relations program is successful only if the student council program is fundamentally sound. These guidelines may help:

- Each area of school life should receive balanced, positive emphasis.
- Students and faculty members are important public relations agents.
- Maximum participation by students and faculty in activities is desirable.
- The school bears the ultimate responsibility for all activities held in its name. Participants and community should know this. The principal is the individual held responsible.
- Students and community should not be exploited by a multitude of money-making projects.
- The purposes, processes, and results of the program should be continually evaluated and re-planned from these evaluations.
- Be correctly informed and help young people keep the grapevine honest.

Good Public Relations in the School

Since the student council gets its power to act from the principal, he should be kept informed about council activities. Principals often do not have time to seek out information. Extend communications among principal, adviser, and others by using memos that briefly tell what's happening.

Encourage student participation in civic activities and community projects.

Make school visitors feel welcome. Appoint some council members as receptionist-guides.

Keep the student body and faculty informed of student council activities and listen for feedback.

Hold open meetings before or after school for voluntary attendance of student body members.

Publicity Channels

Newspapers (school, local, state, daily, and weekly)

Radio and television (public service time is often available at no cost)

Bulletin boards and posters at school and in the community (for example, on each floor and in the lunchroom)

School intercom system

Student-community grapevine

Magazines and bulletins

Minutes of council meetings (posted and distributed)

Assembly programs

Exhibits and displays

Suggestion box (publish suggestions received)

Basic Guidelines for Publicity

Visually interesting and colorful

Attractive and easily read

Factually and mechanically correct

Complete (all essential information included)

Carefully prepared and monitored grapevine releases

Timed correctly (publicity too soon or too late is wasted)

Ethical (no exploitation of persons or groups to obtain support)

Thoughtfully displayed (posters and articles must be placed for maximum visibility)

Well-coordinated (a responsible person or a standing committee should be in charge of checking details and coordinating publicity efforts)

Evaluating Publicity

Was the purpose of the publicity achieved?

Were the presentations in good taste?

Was the timing right, far enough in advance but near enough to bring results?

Were the results publicized?

Were the outlets used for the publicity effective?

What about tact, objectivity, quality, honesty, and responsibility in every phase of the publicity?

Evaluation and Accountability

An effective student council constantly needs to measure progress. Are we achieving our goals? Are we doing what we should be doing?

Evaluation is more than an end of year report card. It is an honest appraisal of the learning experience. Evaluation needs to be made of specific activities throughout the year, as well as generally at the end of the year. Measurement should be centered in council philosophy and in the genuine objectives of the year.

Methods of Evaluation

1. Establish an evaluation committee at the beginning of the year. The vice president may serve as chairman and be responsible for selecting a committee, which should be representative of each grade level, ethnic group, academic achievement level, etc. After each activity, copies of a student evaluation form are distributed to each member of the committee, who then passes them out to other students. The vicee president is then responsible for tallying the results on a summary form and reporting to the student council. These results are recorded in the minutes which are published for distribution to the student body. The same method can be used at the end of the year with a more generalized form.

2. Permanent portfolios can be passed along each year to the respective committee chairmen. The chairmen are then responsible for including evaluations of each activity. Using these evaluations, the council can make recommendations for the following year.

3. Some form of evaluation can be included automatically in the process of meetings. (Example: discussion based on objectives precedes the decision to sponsor suggested projects.)

4. It is important that the entire student body be reached. Periodic meetings within classrooms without faculty members might be a way of reaching everyone. Reports by representatives can be given, or video tapes of past student council meetings can be played, with time at the end for all students to give suggestions and reactions.

5. The open suggestion box has been used in many schools for comments, suggestions, evaluations, and reactions. (A tape recorder makes a good suggestion box!)

6. The school paper or bulletin board can be used to carry reports of evaluations as well as to provide forms for recording reactions by the entire student body.

7. Some schools open faculty meetings or faculty advisory council meetings to students, to include them in evaluating policies and activities.

8. Some schools find mid-year elections helpful for evaluating the performance of representatives.

9. Members of the council are expected to give written evaluations of the adviser and of themselves.

10. Discussions in the form of student-faculty dialogues can be conducted either informally in one large group or by dividing into several smaller groups. These can maintain rotating faculty and student membership. Speak-outs are a meaningful experience when preparation is adequate and conscious controls are built in, such as tape-recording each session and listening to the tapes.

Other evaluation techniques are continually available and should be an integral part of the council program.

It would be a serious error to end without saying what is most important: that you are going to have fun--really, the time of your life. Junior high school students--teenagers--are the most human, most warm, most wonderfully energetic people in the world. They will laugh at circumstance, at themselves, at the frustrations of trying to get themselves together to accomplish what must be done.

They will laugh with their mouths full, giggle over stupid clumsiness, fall in love and out of love within minutes. They will say things to you like: "For a fat person you don't sweat much!" or "I don't care what the others say, I think you're doing a good job!" or "How was it in the olden days?" (Meaning 1962). And you learn to love them enough to care enough to guide enough to help them discover the worth and process and magnificence of this idea we call student council.

Love, Magic--and Fun

You will be physically, emotionally, intellectually exhausted. You will have driven yourself beyond available help, and some previously unknown teenage kid who was elected to a position of leadership on the basis of a "cute smile" will mail you a badly-folded, badly-spelled, penciled note which says he "really had fun"--which says he loves you . . . which says that it is all worth while--being a junior high/middle school student council adviser.